

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1663

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 1501

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, RP

SUBJECT: FORMER PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL ON INTDRIM NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

REF: (A) MANILA 871, (B) MANILA A-296, OCTOBER 17, 1975,

(C) MANILA A-253, SEPTEMBER 5, 1975

1. IN SPEECH JAN 28 AT PROTESTANT COSMOPOLITAN CHURCH (TRADITIONAL VENUE FOR PUBLIC CRITICISM OF MARTIAL LAW REGIME) FORMER PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL STATED PUBLICLY WHAT HE HAS TOLD AMBASSADOR PRIVATELY, REFAIRS (B) AND (C), AND WROTE RECENTLY TO PRESIDENT OF PHILIPPINE CONSTITUTIONAL ASSOCIATION, REFTTEL (A), ON CALLING OF INTERIM NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. HE URGED PRESIDENT TO CONVENE INTERIM NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (INA), (A) TO SERVE AS RESTRAINT TO HIS ONE MAN RULE, AND (B) TO DECIDE ON SUCCESSION. MACAPAGAL ADMITTED, HOWEVER, MARCOS MIGHT STILL RETAIN MARTIAL LAW POWER TO LEGISLATE EVEN IF THERE WERE INA. ACCORDING AP ACCOUNT, MACAPAGAL MADE PITCH TO ARMED FORCES TO SUPPORT HIS CALL FOR INA "BECAUSE IN CASE OF CIVIL WAR OR VIOLENT STRUGGLE FOR SUCCESSION THEY WILL SUFFER AND ALSO THEY WILL ABSOLVE THEMSELVES FROM RESPONSIBILITY AND RISK FOR SUPPORTING AND SUSTAINING A TOTALITARIAN DICTATORSHIP." FORMER PRESIDENT TERMED MARCOS "SUCCESSION DECREE" UNACCEPTABLE BECAUSE IT HAS NO LEGAL BASIS.

2. DURING QUESTION PERIOD, ONE OF ASSEMBLED REVERENDS ASKED MACAPAGAL WHAT HE PLANNED TO DO ABOUT POVERTY
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AND OPPRESSION, WHICH WERE REAL ISSUES. MACAPAGAL REPORTEDLY GOT UPSET, ACCUSING QUESTIONER OF TRYING TO ENGAGE IN POLITICS.

3. COMMENT: THIS IS MACAPAGAL'S FIRST FORMAL, PUBLIC CRITICISM OF MARCOS SINCE MARTIAL LAW. WHAT HE IS REPORTED TO HAVE SAID YESTERDAY IS CONSIDERABLY Milder THAN WHAT HE HAS WRITTEN PRIVATELY. HIS PUBLIC EXHORTATION TO MILITARY, HOWEVER, IS STILL RATHER STRONG STUFF (BUT CONSISTENT WITH WHAT HE HAS TOLD US PRIVATELY BEFORE).

4. MACAPAGAL MADE SPEECH WHILE PRESIDENT WAS IN SINGAPORE AND MARCOS REACTION REMAINS TO BE SEEN. MACAPAGAL, WHO WAS DEFEATED FOR REELECTION BY MARCOS IN 1965, HAS NO POPULAR FOLLOWING. HIS THREE YEARS SILENCE AND INEVITABLE PRESENCE AT OFFICIAL FUNCTIONS SUCH AS INDEPENDENCE DAY, ETC., HAVE NOT ENDEARED HIM TO OLD OPPOSITION, CHURCH RADICALS, ETC. WHILE IT IS NEVER TOO LATE TO JOIN THE FOLD, WE DOUBT MACAPAGAL PLANS ON EMBARKING ON A COURSE OF ACTIVE OPPOSITION TO THE GOVERNMENT. EVEN IF HE DID, WE DOUBT HE WOULD HAVE MUCH EFFECT OR MUCH FOLLOWING. AS AUDIENCE INDICATED TO HIM, REAL ISSUES ARE NOT ESTABLISHMENT OF INSTITUTIONAL BODIES FOR FORMER POLITICIANS. SULLIVAN

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NNN

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